

ical, and psychological variables that attend these experiences (for a review see Houran & Lange, 2001). It could be said that, in this respect, the study of haunts and poltergeists tells us more about the living than the dead. Reviews of such studies of imagination, cognition, and emotion are absent from this book. This is a severe weakness that should be corrected in future editions.

The touted features and genuine flaws unfortunately make Guiley's book fall short of a great reference work. I am disappointed to report this. The book is beautifully produced and contains a multitude of outstanding illustrations—images that can easily capture and hold the interest of aspiring academics, just like *The Golden Book of the Mysterious* (Watson & Chaneles, 1978) did for me years ago. The price is a good deal for the serious researcher who wants well-prepared summaries of some classic and modern cases, explanations of the various terms and phenomena associated with psychical research, and information on obscure and well-known personalities in psychical research from the past and present. Rosemary Ellen Guiley is a gifted writer who is in the enviable position of being able to produce a really outstanding reference book that is accessible to nearly all lay people. I hope there will be a third edition of this book. Guiley can easily rectify the weaknesses and expand on the strengths of the book. Doing so might hurt sales to the “ghost groupies,” but she would gain and educate more important audiences. In return, the field and lay audiences would have a general book that could well be the gold standard in its genre.

James Houran

Southern Illinois University School of Medicine

Dept. of Psychiatry

P.O. Box 5201

Springfield, IL 62705

e-mail: jhouran@siumed.edu

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The Siren Call of Hungry Ghosts: A Riveting Investigation into Channeling and Spirit Guides, by Joe Fisher (New York: Paraview Press, 2001), 313 pp. Paper. \$16.95. ISBN: 1-931044-02-3

Freeing the Captives: The Emerging Therapy of Treating Spirit Attachment, by Louise Ireland-Frey, M.D. (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Co., 1999), 333 pp. Paper. \$13.95. ISBN: 1-57174-136-4

While hanging out with my friends one day during my early teens, we decided to play with a Ouija board. I declined to participate directly, since my then-fundamentalist religious leanings told me that this was a very questionable activity for a Christian. But I couldn't resist staying around to see what would happen. After a series of fairly run-of-the-mill answers to others' questions, the planchette began to move rapidly and erratically around the board. No one could figure out why it would not respond any more, until I had a sudden flash of insight. "Ask it if it's mad," I suggested, standing safely to the back of the group and away from the board. The planchette moved immediately to "Yes!" To everyone's chorus of "Why?" it responded, "Brenda won't play." A chill moved up my spine. "Why should I play?" I told my friends to ask. The answer came: "To avoid disaster."

Like me, Joe Fisher, author of *The Siren Call of Hungry Ghosts*, was offered control over his future by a discarnate voice—this one emanating from a woman named Aviva who had originally developed trance channeling capabilities as an unexpected by-product of an effort to augment her treatment for cancer with hypnosis and guided visualization. The entity Fisher connected with in 1984, a female presence calling herself Filipa, claimed to be his spirit guide and a lover from a previous lifetime. The attraction between him and Filipa was immediate and intense. In this absorbing book, Fisher recounts his increasing obsession with (and subtle control by) the ethereal world of these discarnate entities—and his gradual loss of engagement with the material world of everyday life—as he nevertheless struggled to hold on to some semblance of journalistic objectivity about the phenomenon.

For some time it seemed as if objective proof of the reality of the guides would not be hard to come by. Russell, the discarnate leader of the entities who emerged, often encouraged the sitters to question and rationally prove what they heard at the weekly sessions. This attitude was distinctive at a time when other channeled entities across North America were gaining huge followings and almost always urged their flocks not to reason with the intellect but to understand with the heart. Despite—or perhaps because of—this refreshing exhortation to question and evaluate the guides' pronouncements, it was very easy for the sitters around Aviva to take their helpers' reality and truthfulness at face value. The discarnates' surprising knowledge of intimate details of the sitters' daily lives, coupled with their extraordinary tendency to be almost made-to-order personality matches with the sitters, also made acceptance seem like the most rational response. Perhaps this is why the guides also felt free to discuss their own recent past lives as human beings, sometimes with remarkable specificity. Names, dates, locations, events, and even snippets of (sometimes later verified) languages came readily.

Fisher's journalistic instincts won out in the end. Having already published one book on the case for reincarnation, he was excited at the prospect of being able to further establish the case for continued existence after physical death by using as evidence the information the guides so willingly provided. What could be better, he thought, than to be able to prove that he was talking with the

still-existing, conscious personalities of people who could be proven to have existed on this earth only a short time ago, but whose physical bodies had died? The guides repeatedly insisted that they were human beings, not spirits, after all, and in fact they had warned the sitters against getting involved with “playful entities” and becoming victims of “soul entrapment.”

Armed, then, with the information from the guides, Fisher made two research trips to England and one to Greece. What he found left him with more questions than answers—and profoundly disillusioned him about his beloved Filipa and the other guides. For, as he pointed out when he later presented the guides with his findings, it was harder to believe their metaphysical teachings to be truthful when their verifiable statements about their lives in this world were of very questionable certainty. Eerily, the reaction of the guides was exactly what Russell had once warned the sitters against with regard to other entities: “Manipulators tend either to embellish or lie outright when challenged . . . They will somehow explain it away.” Urged by Russell to ignore the results of his empirical research and instead to follow his heart and believe in the guides based on his deep emotional attachment to Filipa, Fisher nevertheless turned away from the group. In the end, ironically, the main argument the guides used in their own defense exalted belief over reason.

The story that Fisher tells in *The Siren Call of Hungry Ghosts* adds plausibility to the premise of Louise Ireland-Frey’s book, *Freeing the Captives: The Emerging Therapy of Treating Spirit Attachment*: that conscious, non-material energies can attach themselves to living human beings, to the detriment of both. Where the two books differ is in the kinds of entities each deals with and in the kinds of experiences each author claims to have had with them. In Fisher’s case, the entities claimed to have been human once; his interactions with them lasted three years and during that time they gave repeated evidence of their ability to know things about him beyond what the trance channeler herself could have known. In Ireland-Frey’s case, her earliest contact was by reading about earthbound entities, rather than through any personal encounter with them. It was perhaps her early reading, though, that prepared her for the career she was to take up much later in her life—that of “spirit releasement” therapy. But the spirits she has released have apparently offered no real proof that they are who they have claimed to be.

In *Freeing the Captives*, Ireland-Frey outlines in a systematic but entertaining manner the nature of spirit attachment, the various kinds of discarnate entities that can attach, their various reasons for attaching, and her method for releasing them. The “captives” referenced in the book’s title refers both to the living human individuals being attached and to the attaching entities themselves. In this, Ireland-Frey moves beyond traditional, religiously-mediated rites of exorcism and into a clinical mode, where the welfare and dignity of both parties to the attachment relationship are respected and where “treatment” focuses as much on the needs of the attaching entity as on the needs of the human client seeking releasement.

The largest part of Ireland-Frey's book deals with the releasement of a relatively less frightening class of entities, the souls of the dead (the class that Fisher's guides claimed to belong to). The reasons these entities give her for their decision to attach vary, but often revolve around either confusion about their new, post-mortem condition of existence, or else a strong desire to remain in the flesh in order to enjoy corporeal sensations. In the latter part of the book, the author shows how the techniques used to release the souls of those who have crossed over can be used to free a more frightening class of beings—dark non-corporeal energies that have never incarnated before; what the Christian tradition identifies as demons and devils. Sometimes, Ireland-Frey reveals, the lower-level dark entities also attach because they are able to get vicarious sensory pleasure from the experience. Very often they are confused and deluded, having been told by their leaders in the non-corporeal world that the “darkness” is all there is and that the “light” (more elevated levels of non-corporeal existence) would destroy them. With all these types of entities, Ireland-Frey works to ensure that they separate fully from their incarnate hosts, but then she goes one better than what is claimed about the Carpenter of Galilee, who, according to the stories, sent the demons called “Legion” into a herd of swine. Having summoned divine beings of light and protection before beginning her work, Ireland-Frey gently but firmly tries to persuade the now host-less entities she frees to see and go with these divine helpers, to begin life anew in the upper etheric realms. More often than not, she claims to have been successful. “We need to remember clearly,” she says, “that the negative aspects of the psychospiritual worlds are never as strong as the positive aspects, the dark forces never ultimately as strong as the bright powers” (p. 185).

Ireland-Frey's method of releasement entails the use of a trance channeler who provides the physical body and voice through which the discarnates are able to communicate. Throughout the book, a cautious reader cannot help but wonder whether the forces being contacted are truly independent entities or, instead, just complex manifestations of the channelers' and Ireland-Frey's own psyches. In these relatively brief encounters, there is usually very little opportunity (or reason) to get evidence that they are truly independent energies. This kind of doubt is harder to maintain in the light of Fisher's experience, however.

On that afternoon with my friends more than 30 years ago, I remember asking the Ouija board one more question. “Who will I marry?” For years afterward I kept my eyes and ears peeled for one name—Alfred Bernerd (*not* Bernard) Carper—determined to run away in the opposite direction if I should ever find him, just so I could prove the Ouija board wrong. Just so I could NOT be controlled by the destiny it had predicted for me. Joe Fisher also ran away from the control over his destiny initially offered by the discarnates claiming to be his spiritual guides, but not before a firm connection had been established between him and them. In an Epilog written ten years after the book's original publication, Fisher tells about the mysterious and very rare ailment that he developed shortly after parting company with his etheric benefactors and begin-

ning to write about his experiences with them. The symbolism of the illness suggested that he had been the victim (very nearly a casualty) of a psychic attack. Apparently these kinds of situations did not end with the mystery disease. Shortly after publication of the U.S. edition of his book in the spring of 2001, Joe Fisher committed suicide. Friends noted that he had been having problems in his personal relationships and with his finances, and continuing trouble from the discarnate entities who had once so warmly embraced him. It's a pity Fisher never met Louise Ireland-Frey. Maybe it wouldn't have helped, in the end. But surely it couldn't have hurt.

Brenda Denzler
Chapel Hill, NC
P.O. Box 995
Carrboro, NC 27510

Addendum: Interestingly enough, the board's first response was "ABC," which it elaborated into a name when pressed for specifics. Years later I briefly dated a young man who was one of five children. The oldest's name began with "A", the second oldest's with "B", and so on through "E." The family's last name was "Fischer." In other words, they were A, B, C, D, and E Fischer. In another curious twist, the first name of the man I did eventually marry began with "G."

Swamp Gas Times: My Two Decades on the UFO Beat, by Patrick Huyghe. New York: Paraview Press. 2001. 394 pp. \$17.95, paper. ISBN 1-931044-27-9.

Swamp Gas Times: My Two Decades on the UFO Beat is a collection of articles on the UFO subject published by science journalist Patrick Huyghe over the last two decades. Huyghe is first to be credited with a ground-breaking *New York Times Magazine* feature in 1979 prompted by the release of the first batch of CIA documents on unidentified flying objects under the Freedom of Information Act. This success opened many doors for his future reporting. Most of his later stories are short and ran in *OMNI* magazine between 1984 and 1997. More recent ones have appeared in *Science Digest* or on the internet site Space.com, and Huyghe now edits a print and web journal, *The Anomalist*.

Huyghe's time on the "UFO beat" certainly made an important contribution, since most media refused to touch the subject. As a freelance journalist who has recently covered the UFO subject for mainstream newspapers such as the *Boston Globe*, I empathize wholeheartedly with Huyghe's statement that he was not open with his colleagues about his work for fear of damaging his career. Unfortunately, I too have felt compelled to guard my professional standing in this way. I commend him for sticking with his reporting despite the risk.

I found Huyghe's writing on a broad range of topics relating to UFOs to be uneven. Some pieces are in-depth, well-researched and informative. Others, especially many of the *OMNI* stories, are infused with a simplistic, popular tone. Perhaps Huyghe was constricted by the requirements of his editors, and he was certainly limited by length (many stories on complicated topics aver-